

VOC Emissions & Air Quality

Industry Issue Overview

New Limits Proposed for Products in all Paint Segments

How are VOC's Regulated?

Canada implemented its first VOC regulation in June 2009 establishing concentration limits for VOCs in 14 categories of Automotive Refinishing (AR) products. The Canadian regulation established mandatory, maximum allowable VOC concentration limits for 53 categories of Architectural, Industrial and Maintenance (AIM) coatings, all of which governs many products manufactured, imported, sold, or offered for sale in Canada. There are also regulations for the Industrial Commercial Adhesives & Sealants (ICAS) VOC regulation.

While the CASE industry remains very active in ongoing regulatory development, it remains a priority for CPCA to promote regulatory compliance to members with respect to established regulations for VOCs.

Significant VOC Emissions Reduction

Volatile Organic Compounds or VOCs are chemical compounds that occur both naturally and are found in many manufactured products. The compounds are considered volatile, which allows them to evaporate under normal indoor temperatures and air pressure. The emissions released during evaporation contribute to the formation of precursors of ground-level ozone to create smog in many consumer products.

Since the introduction of VOC regulations for architectural and automotive coatings more than 20 years ago, testing done by Environment and Climate Change Canada in 2015 concluded that total VOC emissions from paint decreased by 44 kilotonnes for the period from 2005 to 2014 and more since then for a total reduction of 44 kilotonnes. Virtually all water-based products, 98 percent, meet the regulated VOC limits in their respective categories. This has improved air quality and better human health for Canadians.

Architectural paint is now almost exclusively water-based and generally represents more than 50% of all volume sold in Canada. A significant percentage of water-based paint is also used in many commercial segments including heavy industrial and the automotive refinishing sector.

Current Federal VOC Regulations

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In 2023 the federal Government introduced 'new' regulations for 49 of the 53 categories in the Architectural regulation and is moving aggressively to have Canada align VOC regulations with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), which is the highest level in the world. This was done even though 32 jurisdictions in California do NOT meet those levels, yet the federal Government expects Canada to do so in severe climate conditions. The final regulation will be published in the Canada Gazette sometime in 2024. CPCA continues to argue against the very high bar the CASE industry is now expected to meet. If passed as proposed, it will lead to many existing products requiring reformulation and some will very likely be removed from shelves due to the high cost of reformulation.



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CPCA Regulatory Focus on VOCs

Along with consumer product and architectural coating VOC regulations, various U.S. jurisdictions have also implemented regulations restricting VOC emissions for adhesives and sealant products. The Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) region for the northeastern US States, certain air districts in California, and Washington, D.C. All currently have region-specific adhesives and sealant VOC regulations. Even some OTC States in the Northeast do not meet their existing regulations and 32 districts in California also do not meet the new CARB regulations. However, Canada is now expected to meet these same low VOC limits in the proposed regulations expected to pass in 2024.

CPCA supports companies in the CASE industry in Canada: Manufacturers, Suppliers, Distributors, and those relying on them for some part of their business including 'their' customers. This represents thousands of products in key coatings categories. While the CASE industry has met significant challenges and remains focused on lowering emissions, CPCA believes government-imposed regulations have reached a nexus point given the huge reductions already achieved. If the currently proposed federal VOC limits are passed in 2024 the outcome will inevitably mean a loss of products for Canadians, a high cost of reformulation for businesses, and minimal or no improvement in air quality.

44kt

Emissions Reduced Since 1999

90%

Low-VOC architectural
Paint Sold in Canada

49

Architectural Categories of
53 Proposing Lower Limits



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*Trusted Advocacy.
Proven Results.*

About CPCA

The Canadian Paint and Coatings Association (CPCA) was founded in 1913 and since then it has forged a legacy as one of Canada's oldest trade associations advocating for the interests of the paint and coatings industry. CPCA's team of regulatory and chemical experts understand how policy, regulations, and industry are intricately connected, providing proactive approaches on legislative and regulatory development for critical issues for the CASE Industry. For more information on this or other issues of interest contact CPCA.